

Chairperson Roberts and Members of the Committee, for the record my name is Barbara Gaskell and I reside in Great Falls. I am the proud mother of 2 little girls, Lanie whom is 6 and Kelsey Jo who is 4.

I was in the midst of a divorce when little Kelsey was born. I soon found out that not only did she have special needs - but so did I.

I was financially, emotionally and physically drained. If I had not had waiver services - I am quite certain my circumstances, as well as Kelsey Jo's - would not be as they are today.

Kelsey has endured 25 hospitalizations in her 14 years - as recently as 2 weeks ago.

She was flown to Seattle Children's hospital emergently twice. The first time was right after she was born. She IS special - she was baptised, blessed ~~by~~ ~~as~~ priest on Palm Sunday - and was in the air and on her way to Seattle 20 minutes later.

Kelsey has 3 holes in her heart, a prolapsed valve, small optic nerve, feeding issues

low tone, failure to thrive, duodenal atresia, has had duodenal bypass surgery and PEG tube placement, numerous bowel obstructions — surgery, sepsis, pneumonia, infection and reactive airway as well as cognitive delays) — AND — she has a glorious smile — which TRUMPS all the rest.

Kelsey attends special pre-school, goes to therapies, doctor visits, undergoes labs, tests, x-rays and procedures on top of her daily schedule and needs.

The time and issues associated with Kelsey has been difficult for our little family. Her sister is only 6 and has had some difficulty not only understanding a single parent household and the issues associated with the other parent but also, 'Why Mommy has to spend so much time with sister?' — this is hard for me as well as she.

Waiver services has allowed me many things — one of which is some 'focus' as well as some time and some direction. These things help me to be a better

parent not only for Kelsey - but for  
Lanie as well.

I have been able to make things  
safer for Kelsey - who is a daily  
safety concern. I have been able to  
learn how to guide her and help  
her to learn and grow in ways  
specific to her problems.

I have been able to take a moment  
to step back and breathe - just for  
a moment... and not despair.

Thank you for listening and for  
the help that Waiver offers.